

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CU-04

COME-00 /087 W

-----048371 031444Z /46

R 031145Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9584

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

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FOR AID/AFR/CAWA

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CT

SUBJ: NEW ECONOMIC COUNCIL, SUPREME COURT AND POLITICAL BUREAU

REF: BANGUI 2603

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY BEFORE HIS CORONATION, EMPEROR BOKASSA HAS ACTIVATED THREE OF THE MAJOR INSTITUTIONS OF THE 1976 CONSTITUTION. HE EXPLAINED THIS AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF "LIBERALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION" OF THE REGIME. TWO FORMER MINISTERS WERE REHABILITATED AT THE SAME TIME. THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE ELECTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RAPID SUCCESSION BEGINNING NOVEMBER 24 AND ENDING DECEMBER 1, EMPEROR BOKASSA PERSONALLY PRESIDED OVER INSTALLATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, A NEW SUPREME COURT, AND THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE COUNTRY'S SOLE POLITICAL PARTY, MESAN.

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THESE ARE THREE OF THE MAJOR INSTITUTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE CREATED BY THE DECEMBER 4, 1976 CONSTITUTION, AND THE GOVERNMENT NOTED REPEATEDLY THAT THEIR ACTIVATION WAS PART OF THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONSTITUTION. BOKASSA SAID SPECIFICALLY THAT IT WAS AN ELEMENT IN THE "LIBERALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION" OF THE REGIME.

2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL: BOKASSA BEGAN WITH THIS COUNCIL, WHICH IS PERHAPS THE LEAST IMPORTANT OF THE NEW INSTITUTIONS. IT HAS AN ADVISORY FUNCTION FOR ALL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY AND WILL BE HEADED BY JEAN-CHRISTOPHE MACKPAYEN, ONETIME MINISTER AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HEAD WHO SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IN POLITICAL DISGRADE FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS. MACKPAYEN, WHO WAS A 1970 INTERNATIONAL VISITOR GRANTEE, REPLACES FRANCOIS GON, WHO WAS ORIGINALLY NOMINATED FOR THE POSITION BUT WAS PLACED ON SICK LEAVE LAST MONTH. MACKPAYEN IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE MESAN POLITICAL BUREAU.

3. SUPREME COURT: NEXT CAME INSTALLATION OF THE NEW SUPREME COURT, WHICH UNDER THE CONSTITUTION MAY DECLARE LAWS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND HAS A BROAD ADVISORY ROLE IN PREPARATION OF LAWS AND ON JURIDICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS. FIDELE MANDABABORNOU IS PRESIDENT OF THE COURT, DISPLACING THE FORMER PRESIDENT, JOSEPH MANDE-DJAPOU TO ONE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTSHIPS. MANDABABORNOU WAS PRESIDENT OF THE COURT BEFORE THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE BUT THEN BECAME LEGAL COUNSELOR TO THE EMPEROR.

4. MESAN POLITICAL BUREAU: FINALLY AND MOST IMPORTANT CAME THE INSTALLATION OF THE MESAN POLITICAL BUREAU, WHICH EFFECTIVELY DIRECTS THE COUNTRY'S SOLE POLITICAL PARTY. THE PARTY IS SUPPOSED TO FIX GENERAL POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, CONTROL THE ACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR IT. ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION, ELECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARE TO BE HELD WITHIN SIX MONTHS AFTER THE INVESTITURE OF PARTY OFFICIALS.

5. MOST SURPRISING OF THE PERSONNEL CHANGES WAS THE REAPPEARANCE OF MME ELIZABETH DOMITIEN, WHOSE NAME ON THE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBERSHIP LIST IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWS THAT OF BOKASSA, WHO CONTINUES TO BE PRESIDENT FOR LIFE OF MESAN. MME DOMITIEN LOST HER POST AS MESAN VICE-PRESIDENT AND CAE PRIME MINISTER IN MID-1976 REPORTEDLY AS A RESULT OF DIFFERENCES WITH BOKASSA OVER PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HER APPOINTMENT WAS WILDLY APPLAUDED BY THE MESAN MEMBERS, AS WAS THAT OF DAVID DACKO, WHO RANKS FOURTH AFTER PRIME MINISTER PATASSE ON THE POLITICAL BUREAU.

6. COMMENT: IN MOVING FORWARD ON ACTIVATION OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT FORESEEN IN THE 1976 CONSTITUTION AND IN REHABILITATING POPULAR FORMER MINISTERS, BOKASSA APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO EMPHASIZE FOR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AUDIENCES HIS DETERMINATION TO IMPLEMENT THE MORE DEMOCRATIC ASPECTS OF THE CONSTITUTION AT A TIME WHEN HE IS INVESTING HIMSELF AS EMPEROR. THE IMPORTANT THING WILL BE HOW QUICKLY HE PROCEEDS WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, HOW OPEN THEY ARE, AND HOW MUCH POWER HE ALLOWS THE

ASSEMBLY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUPREME COURT, COURTS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BANGUI02646
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770449-0426
Format: TEL
From: BANGUI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771297/aaaadefa.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a0acd70c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGUI 2603
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 372039
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NEW ECONOMIC COUNCIL, SUPREME COURT AND POLITICAL BUREAU
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a0acd70c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009